

## \*\*\*SPAM\*\*\* Latest Updates from the NCGA



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NC Senate District 41



## NC Senate District 41 Newsletter

June 25, 2021

### State Budget Updates



Republican leadership released their [state budget proposal](#) on Monday evening. Democrats were given less than 24 hours notice to review and analyze the 426 page

document before it moved very quickly through committees and to the floor for a vote on Thursday and today.

We have \$29.7 billion in recurring state funds available to appropriate and \$5.4 billion in one-time money from the American Rescue Plan. We also have a lot of needs in our state, much of it pent up since we could not reach agreement on a state budget during the last session. This presents us with a **once in a generation opportunity** to do transformative things for our state.

Yet, instead of seizing this moment and making strategic investments in our people and our state, Senate Republicans have chosen to stick with an austerity budget and more tax cuts for wealthy people and out of state corporations. Even after adding to our massive Rainy Day Fund and making epic tax cuts, the Senate **budget still leaves more than \$4 billion on the table**. It seems they would rather let billions of dollars sit unused than address our teacher shortage, our low per pupil funding, our aging roads and bridges, our inadequate child care network, our homeless neighbors, our rising cancer rates, our high infant mortality rates, and the 600,000+ residents who are without healthcare coverage.

**I see this budget proposal as an initial, lowball offer.** We know the priorities will change as the bill moves through the House and to the Governor. I will continue to work toward a better budget for our state.

Some major problems that caused me to vote NO:

- Includes **only a 3% raise for our public school teachers**. That's insulting when these hard-working professionals have gone years without any raise and taught through a pandemic. The Governor's budget includes a 10% raise for teachers, which is what I support.
- **No plan to close the healthcare coverage gap** for the 600,000+ North Carolinians who are working but have not access to affordable healthcare.
- **Omits any funding to research the cause of ocular melanoma, to improve pipeline safety or to fund Cornelius's affordable housing plan**, which are top concerns in my district.
- **Shorts Huntersville by \$12 million** in American Rescue Plan funding for local governments. The Governor's budget included the funds, but the Republican Senate did not. (I am working with local officials and NCGA colleagues towards a solution.)
- Pilfers one of **Mecklenburg's Assistant District Attorneys** despite a major backlog of major crime cases
- Includes power grab **provisions that are unconstitutional and not appropriate for a budget, such as** stripping powers from the Governor, the State Board of Elections, and the Attorney General.

However, there are **parts of the budget that I appreciate**. They include:

- Funds for the **NC Promise tuition program**, which will allow more students to afford college.
- Funds to ensure that **every school district has at least one psychologist**. One per district is not enough, but it's a start.
- Funds for additional **Innovation Waiver slots** for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Extension of full **Medicaid benefits for eligible postpartum mothers** from 60 days

- to 12 months. These improvements are long-overdue, small steps forward.
- Funding to expand broadband to rural area, although not funding to make it affordable to those communities.
  - DOT funding changes that should get at least some of our local road projects moving forward

During the floor debate on the proposed budget, **Democrats offered nine amendments** and explained why each was critically important. Our amendments included increasing teacher pay, allocating funds to fully address the Leandro decision, restoring federal HAVA funds for election security, 2% COLA for state retirees, restoration of master's pay, pay raises for IDD direct care workers, universal pre-K for 3-and-4-year olds, and funding for maternal and infant health. Unfortunately, Republicans immediately moved to have 8 of our 9 amendments "lie upon the table," which means the amendments are dead and cannot be brought up again for the rest of session. You can view my floor speech about the [amendment](#) I introduced [here](#). The budget passed the Senate 32:18.

As we continue to parse the bill, my additional areas of particular interest are infrastructure, affordable housing, healthcare, green energy investments, local funding needs, and pre-K through university education funding. I hope that we can negotiate a budget that ushers in a shared recovery from the pandemic, with investments that put us on a path toward good health and prosperity. You can learn more about the budget negotiations in [this WUNC podcast](#) and in [this Charlotte Observer article](#).

**I also want to hear from you about what your priorities are for the state budget.** Please take a few minutes to fill out a short survey below about what issues are most important to you. Thank you to everyone who has already taken the time to fill it out.

**Budget Priorities Survey Here**

## Updates on Noteworthy Votes



Now that several House Bills have crossed over to the Senate chamber, we're seeing several of them in committees and on the floor. Below is a selection of noteworthy bills I voted on over the past 2 weeks. You can find a full list of bills I voted on [here](#).

**Bills on which I voted YES:**

- **[HB130](#), East Coast Greenway/State Trails.** Authorizes the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources to add the East Coast Greenway to the State Parks System as a State trail.
- **[HB272](#), Revise Health Standard for Lead.** Amends the definition of "lead poisoning hazard" under the statutes governing lead poisoning in children and pregnant women to decrease the amount of lead in drinking water that constitutes a "lead poisoning hazard" from 15 parts per billion (ppb) to 10 ppb.
- **[HB629](#), Physician Assistant/Nurse Practitioner/STOP Act Clarification.** Amends the conditions under which a physician assistant or a nurse practitioner are required to consult with the supervising physician when prescribing a targeted controlled substance.
- **[HB642](#), Down Syndrome Organ Nondiscrimination Act.** Prohibits health care providers and health insurers from organ transplant discrimination on the basis of disability.
- **[HB734](#), Department of Health & Human Services Revisions.** Makes various administrative changes to DHHS and prevents the operation of unlicensed mental health facilities. Includes language from a bill I co-sponsored, [SB665](#), Prevent Unlicensed Mental Health Facilities.

ABC

**Bills on which I voted NO (despite the positive-sounding titles):**

- **[HB64](#), Government Transparency Act of 2021.** This is the PCS (proposed committee substitute) version of [SB355](#), which creates a new requirement that state government employers make public a general description of personnel actions, including reasons for terminations, demotions, promotions, transfers, etc. This bill presents a conundrum. It is supported by lobbyists for the news media, who want access to this information about all state employees. While I see the value of transparency in certain cases, particularly concerning "bad apple" employees with power, lobbyists for teachers and other state employees argue that the bill is too broad, could violate due process and privacy rights, and will discourage people from taking jobs with the state.
- **[SB326](#), Election Integrity Act.** Changes election law to require that absentee ballots be received at the county board of elections by 5pm on Election Day, regardless of postmark, in order to be counted. I raised many concerns about this bill during committee, especially that voters will be at the mercy of the USPS to deliver their ballot on time. Mail delays and other factors will cause **many valid ballots to arrive after Election Day and they will be thrown in the trash**. This bill will lead to **bipartisan voter disenfranchisement, not election integrity**. You can read more about the bill and see my interview about it [here](#). More resources can also be found [here](#) and [here](#).
- **[SB724](#), Expand Access to Voter ID & Voting.** Creates a portal for visually impaired people to vote online (a necessary improvement since the changes are already coming due to a legal settlement), codifies online VR (an unnecessary move since this is already in effect), and mentions that it is the intent of the General Assembly to fund a program to identify and assist voters needing photo ID (no specifics provided). This bill got no Democratic support because, while it sounds good, it was actually unnecessary and part of Republicans' plans to feed the narrative that there was fraud in the 2020 election and that changes must be made to election laws.

- **[SB725](#), Prohibit Private Money in Elections Admin.** Prohibits the State Board of Elections and county boards of elections from accepting charitable donations for conducting elections or paying poll workers. Ninety-seven counties across the state depended on these additional funds from various foundations in 2020 in order to conduct a safe and secure election. The money paid for single-use pens and PPE and hazard pay to poll workers. While I agree that private foundations should never be allowed to influence the outcome of our election (and there is no evidence that they did in 2020), it's unwise to preemptively cut off these donations when many counties cannot afford to run elections without them. This is especially true given the cuts in funding to the State Board of Election in the GOP budget. You can read more about the bill and see my interview [here](#).

## Bills I Support that Have Been Signed into Law by the Governor



Below is a condensed list of some of the bills I voted "yes" on this session that have been signed into law by Governor Cooper. A full list of bills the Governor has signed can be found [here](#).

- **[HB53](#), Educational Changes for Military-Connected Students.** Authorizes student attendance in a school district for children of active duty military and clarifies continuous enrollment for high school students who are dependents of military personnel.
- **[HB82](#), Summer Learning Choice for NC Families.** Requires each school district to offer a school extension learning recovery and enrichment program after the end of the 2020-2021 school year.
- **[HB138](#), Adopt Wounded Heroes Day.** Designates the twenty-fourth day of April of each year as Wounded Heroes Day in North Carolina.
- **[SB103](#), Reduce Regulation to Help Children with Autism.** Establishes a licensure process for behavior analysts that will enable more providers to be available.
- **[SB130](#)/[HB142](#), UNC Building Reserves/Certain Projects.** I am a co-sponsor of this bill, which appropriates funds for various UNC building projects, including \$982,090 for a Sciences Building at UNC Charlotte.
- **[SB135](#), Improve Anatomical Gift Donation Process.** Makes it easier to maintain your status as an organ donor.
- **[SB387](#), Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021.** Makes various changes to the North Carolina Read to Achieve Program

- [SB586](#), **Study Lipedema**. Directs the Legislative Research Commission to study Lipedema.

## Updates from Senate Judiciary Committee

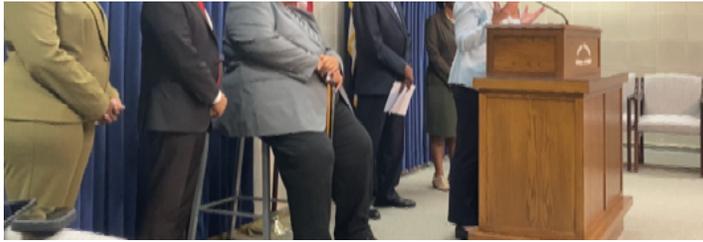


Below are some of the bills we discussed in [Judiciary Committee](#) these past 2 weeks:

- [HB145](#), **Property Protection Act/DVPO**. This bill would allow gun owners who are subject to a domestic violence protective order to store their seized weapons at a private firearms dealer, instead of at the sheriff's office, and to sell them via the dealer. The bill sponsor mentioned he wanted to alleviate the "anxiety the gun owner has about their firearms being held by the sheriff." In committee I raised concerns about the anxiety of the person who needed the DVPO and how this change could impact her safety. We would need safeguards to ensure the firearms don't make their way back to the original owner or someone else who would use them to threaten or harm the person protected by the DVPO.
- [HB312](#), **Qualifications for Sheriff/Expunction (SB306)**. This bill would disqualify candidates for sheriff if they were convicted of a felony, even if expunged.
- [SB711](#), **NC Compassionate Care Act**. This bill would allow for the provision of **medical cannabis within North Carolina**. Patients with debilitating conditions including PTSD, epilepsy, MS, and cancer will be able to receive prescribed medical cannabis to alleviate pain and nausea associated with those conditions. (The full list of covered conditions is in the bill link.) This would be major progress for our state. **I believe that we need to stop making caregivers, patients and veterans into criminals by denying them legal access to a non-medical treatment that can help.** The committee heard from many veterans, cancer survivors, parents of ill children, and other citizens who advocated for medical cannabis. Some conservative lobbyists and legislators expressed opposition and concerns that the bill may need to include more restrictions. Debate will continue. I hope we can come together to help North Carolinians who are struggling find a legal way to ease their pain. You can read more about the bill [here](#) and [here](#).

## Press Conference for Voting Rights





I joined my Senate Democratic colleagues last week to speak against the **undemocratic elections bills Republicans introduced** (more details on the bills in the "Updates on Noteworthy Votes" section).

I got my start in politics registering voters in my community. I have personally helped hundreds of people fill out the form to get registered and have led teams of volunteers to do the same. My teams and I registered Democrats, Republicans, Independents, Third Party and people who don't know which party they want to be in. I encouraged them all to register to vote, because **I believe democracy works best when every eligible voter is engaged in the process**. That's why I oppose laws that make it harder to vote and laws that will result in valid ballots being thrown in the trash like [Senate Bill 326](#). **Throwing away those valid ballots is the opposite of election integrity; it is bipartisan disenfranchisement, and it's wrong**. My press conference remarks are from 10:05 to 14:50 at the link below.

**Watch the Press Conference Here**

## Town Hall

A promotional graphic for an online town hall event. The background is dark blue. At the top, it says "WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16TH | 7-8PM" in white. Below that, the word "ONLINE" is written in large white letters. Underneath "ONLINE", the name "SENATOR NATASHA MARCUS" is written in white on a green rectangular background. Below that, the words "TOWN HALL" are written in large white letters. At the bottom, it says "SIGN UP AT: HTTP://BIT.LY/MARCUSTOWNHALL" in white. On the left side of the graphic, there is a small portrait of Senator Natasha Marcus, a woman with short brown hair wearing a blue top.

Thank you to everyone who joined me for my second Town Hall of the year last Wednesday. I hope it was helpful to your understanding of **what's happening in Raleigh and what I stand for**. I appreciate my special guest, Candice Roth, MSN, RN, CENP, and want to thank her again for sharing her story about why Medicaid expansion is so important in our state. I also heard from attendees about topics ranging from tax reform to local tree statutes to public education.

## Centene Charlotte Campus Dedication Ceremony



This week, along with Governor Cooper and other elected officials and business leaders, I attended the **Centene East Coast Campus Dedication Ceremony**. Centene, a Fortune 500 healthcare company, will join Wells Fargo, Duke Energy, and TIAA in the University City Campus of Charlotte. Centene will **bring more than 3,237 new high-paying jobs to the Mecklenburg area**, as well as on-site daycare and a corporate professional development university. As chair of the Mecklenburg Delegation, it brings me great joy to see the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Business Investment Grant paying off for our community. Centene's commitment to North Carolina is the largest job creation project in the state in the 18 year history of the [Job Development Investment Grant](#). **When a diverse, inclusive, and forward thinking company** like Centene chooses Mecklenburg for its new offices, that says a lot about the people who live and work here.

## American Airlines to Offer Flight Incentive for COVID-19 Vaccine Recipients at Charlotte Event this Saturday

**Get your COVID-19 vaccine**  
at Summerstock Charlotte or show your vaccination card for a chance to win two round-trip tickets to any American Airlines destination.

**Summerstock CLT**  
Sunday, June 27 | 12 to 4 p.m.  
Camp Greene Park | 1221 Alleghany St.  
[summerstockclt.com](http://summerstockclt.com)



In partnership with [Summerstock Charlotte](#) and American Airlines, Mecklenburg County Public Health is hosting a COVID-19 community vaccination clinic as part of the festival **this Sunday, June 27, 12-4pm at Camp Greene Park at 1221 Alleghany St, Charlotte**. Event attendees who are vaccinated on-site with MCPH **will be entered into a drawing to win two roundtrip tickets to any destination American Airlines flight** (first-class for U.S. domestic destinations; coach-class for international destinations). **\$25 Summer Cash Cards will also be available** this weekend. Anyone 18+ who gets vaccinated with a first dose — or drives someone for a first dose vaccination — will receive the \$25 Cash Card.

MCPH encourages all eligible residents ages 12 and older to get a COVID-19 vaccination. Eligible individuals can simply walk up for a vaccination at the Summerstock Charlotte event, make an appointment [here](#) or by calling the COVID-19 hotline at 980-314-9400 (Option 3 for English and Option 8 for Spanish).

For anyone needing COVID-19 vaccination transportation assistance, there are a variety of options:

- Contact the Mecklenburg Transportation System at 980-314-7600.
- Eligible residents can call [RIDE UNITED NC](#) at 1-844-771-RIDE for help scheduling free round-trip rides to vaccine appointments.
- [Uber](#) and [Lyft](#) are offering free rides to a vaccination clinic through July 4.

More information about the COVID-19 vaccine and ongoing vaccination events is available at [www.MeckNC.gov/COVID-19](http://www.MeckNC.gov/COVID-19) or by calling the Public Health COVID-19 hotline at 980-314-9400.

If this newsletter was forwarded to you and you would like to receive future editions, please subscribe at [this link](#) or email me at [Natasha.Marcus@ncleg.gov](mailto:Natasha.Marcus@ncleg.gov) and let me know you want to subscribe to the biweekly newsletter.

## Contact Our Office

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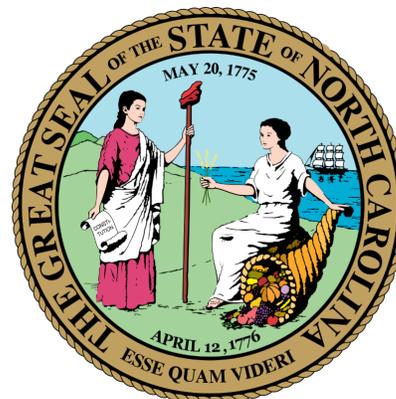
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How can we help you? Let us know and [reach out](#) to our office! We want to hear from you.

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